

THE APOCALYPSE: A POEM.

By JOHN NEWTON BROWN
of Exeter, NH
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Delivered before the Literary Fraternity of Waterville College at their Ninth Anniversary

Waterville College
Aug. 3, 1836.

To Rev J. N. Brown:

Dear Sir:--The members of the Literary Fraternity have directed us, in their behalf , to present you their sincere thanks for the valuable Poem you submitted at their recent anniversary, and earnestly to solicit a copy of the same for publication.

E. L. Magoon
S. S. Bradford
Calvin Dickford

To the Literary Fraternity of Waterville College.

Gentlemen:--The Poem, prepared at your desire, I submit to your disposal. You will not need to be reminded that it is but a fragment of a more extensive, perhaps too daring design, which may never be completed. That, under these circumstances, it should be favorably received, inspires the pleasing hope that Biblical topics will still continue to be regarded by the young men of our country as the staple of its highest Literature. May the time never come when that Literature shall be ashamed to bear brightly and broadly on its brow the honors of that dear name which is "above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

J. N. Brown
Exeter, N.H., October 22, 1826

THE APOCALYPSE: A POEM

PART I

The Revelation of yet unborn Time,
In symbols chosen, definite, sublime;
Which He who sits upon the Eternal Throne,
Gave to the Mediator's hand alone;
And He, by angel ministries, to me
Duly unfolded; with the historic key;
I sing:--a theme for human lips too high,
Unhallowed by thy touch, Spirit of Prophecy!--
Yet happy they that read, and they that hear,
These heavenly warnings; for the time is near!

Wake, sacred Gratitude, thy loftiest hymn,
Exalt thy voice above the Seraphim!
Sing Him that loved us—for a strain so dear,
The glorious Seraphim shall stoop to hear;
And as they listen to the rapturous song.
Rolling through earth and heaven its tide along.
In that full harmony of grateful zeal,
Which men redeemed, and they alone, can feel;
Breathe sweet responses to the strain, and then,
Half form the wish that they themselves were men!

Sing Him that loved us! He, with blood divine,
Poured from his own pierced heart, like generous wine
From out the purple clusters of the vine,
On God's high altar in its freshness laid,
The sumless price of our redemption paid.
He loves, He loves us! For the sins that lay
Dark on our souls, his blood hath washed away.
He loves, He loves us! And hath raised us up
To heights of dignity beyond our hope;
Owned as his brethren — crowned above as kings--
Where love and honor are immortal things!
A royal priesthood, at the Eternal Throne,
To pay a worship, God will not disown!

Sing Him that loved us, and that loves us still~
Whose hand for us breaks the eternal seal
Of future time, its secrets to reveal.
In the Revealer of God's mysteries, see
Afresh the love that bled on Calvary;
And give that love to song, and bid it soar
In power and glory more and evermore!

Sing Him that loved us, and will love us, when,

Borne on the clouds of heaven. He comes again;
When every eye shall see Him, and the hand
That pierced Him shall at his tribunal stand;
When judgment is pronounced, and from the pale
And ghastly lips of myriads comes the wail
Of hope departed—guilt too late deplored—
Then will He love us!—Even so, O Lord!

I, wont of old upon his breast to lean,
And watch with loving eye his gentle mien;
When, veiled his greatness for divinest end,
He dwelt among us, as a friend with friend;
I, John, his servant, saw his face once more,
In all the majesty which erst it wore,
When on the holy mount, a little space,

We saw his glory, and admired his grace.
Hear, ye that love Him, while the tale I tell,
or what that memorable hour befel.
Till every circumstance be so portrayed
On memory's tablet, that it cannot fade.
Hear, ye that love Him ; for your suffering lot,
Throughout nil time, by Him is not forgot—
For his name's sake, we bear, and murmur not.
Nor space remote, nor distant ages, sever
Those links of love that bind our hearts forever.

Now three-score years in silent lapse were fled
Since I beheld Him, risen from the dead ;
Since on the brow of sacred Olivet,
For the last time a chosen band he met,
And charged and blessed us, and before our eyes,
In silent pomp, rose to his native skies.
Oh! how did Memory linger o'er that spot.
And the soul love Him, though we saw Him not ;
'Twas our delight his sacred cross to rear—
Toils, perils, sufferings, for his sake were dear.
And when by Time, and Persecution's hand,
Thinner and thinner grew the chosen band,
Death had strange sweetness that o'erpowered its pain-
For us to live was Christ — to die was gain I
Then I, at last, of all was left alone;
Those most beloved, Paul, Peter, James, were gone;
The mother of my Lord, his dying trust—
And she, my own sweet love! were in the dust;
She whom I loved with such devoted truth,
Star of my age and treasure of my youth!
That star was set ; that treasure flown above;
And I, bereaved . f every earthly love,

Was thrown by stern Domitian's decree,
On rocky Patmos — prisoner of the sea!

Roll on, ye waves of the Aegean, roll!
The music of your waters, in my soul
Is blended with my cave, and mountain stream,
Like melody of a remembered dream.
Oft have I listened to your solemn roar,
At distance breaking on the rocky shore,
But never did your mighty music play
Upon my ear so glorious as that day,
(Never from memory to pass away!)
When to my fond, but dazzled eye was given
The sight of Him I soon shall meet in heaven.

There is a bound to human tyranny—
I was a prisoner, yet my soul was free.
I was an exile, doomed to tread no more
My haunts of youth, blue Galilee's sweet shore;
Yet still I felt with a superior love,
That my true home was—with my Lord above!
A stranger and a pilgrim on the earth,
Is he who boasts a spiritual birth;
An heir of nobler happiness on high,
Whose very hope on earth is ecstasy.
Free of the universe—beloved of God—
It little recks him where he makes abode ;
In his own breast he bears the living spring
Of love and joy, too pure for stain or sting;
And round his steps an atmosphere is thrown
Of heavenly light, peculiarly his own.
So I, all lonely as I seemed, could find,
On that bleak rock, the banquet of the mind;
My earliest rising, and my latest rest.
Saw peace divine the inmate of my breast;
Each day brought blessings; but of all the seven,
Holiest and sweetest still, the chosen day of heaven!

Day of the Lord! how dear to me art thou!
Whether with storm or sunshine on thy brow;
Whether thou dawnest on the land or sea,
Day of the Lord ! how dear art thou to me!
Wheth3r with gathering multitudes I go
Up to God's house—that type of Heaven below—
Or, far removed from all enjoyments there,
I find myself a lonely worshipper,
In the deep hush of solitude to pour
My full heart out to Him whom I adore;
In secret meeting that Almighty Friend,

On whom my everlasting hopes depend;
And but in spirit hold communion sweet
With all who gather round the Mercy seat;
And patient wait to join, with those I love,
In the eternal Sabbath kept above;—
Rich earnest of that blest Eternity,—
Day of the Lord! how dear thou art to me!

It was the morning of that holy day,
When kneeling in my cell, as wont, to pray,
Wrapt in devotion's elevating trance—
A sudden glory filled the wide expanse;
And on my ear rang like a trumpet-blast,
The awful words : "I am the First and Last!
"Eternity I challenge as my own ;
"Omnipotence is mine, and mine alone."

While yet amazement held me as a spell.
Again I heard those awful accents swell:

"Last of the chosen twelve, and best beloved!
"From thy pure eye be mortal films removed.
"Once more on earth behold thy risen Lord;
"Hear from his lips his message, and record;
"Let all my Churches learn my sovereign will,
"And distant times transmit it, and fulfil."

Trembling I heard, and turned me round to see
The shape divine of Him that spake to me.
Around the scene that opened on my view,
Seven golden lamps their circling brightness threw,
And in the midst a glorious form appeared,
Like, yet unlike, that to my soul endeared.
A robe imperial did his limbs invest,
A golden girdle clasped his noble breast ;
Hair white as snow adorned his reverend head,
Majestic sweetness on his features played ;
His eye shot lightening in its searching glance,
His voice was Ocean waking from its trance.
The glory of his feet alone might shame
The fine brass, glowing in the furnace flame.
In his right hand seven stars their radiance stream,
His countenance dazzled like the noonday beam;
And when his lips he opened, every word
Pierced through the heart like a two-edged sword.

Imagination in its utmost reach.,
May mock the feeble powers of human speech;
But majesty and glory such as this.

On human sense ne'er shed excess of bliss.
In vain I strove to hear—I gasped for breath—
And at his feet fell in the arms of death.

His gentle touch revived me, and his voice
Of kindness made my inmost soul rejoice:
“Fear not, my servant! As in years long past,
“Thou still art dear. I am the First and Last!
“The unchanging object of thy steadfast faith—
“The Prince of Life — though once I bowed to death.

“My hour of suffering for man's sin is o'er—
“Behold! I live, I live forevermore!
"And in my hand is lodged the mighty key,
“That opes the secrets of Eternity.
“My hand alone unlocks death's awful gate,
“And the dread mysteries of the future state;
“And all the realms of spiritual being own
"Allegiance to my universal Throne—
“Yet though my power extends to all beside,
“No world is dear as that for which I died;
“Among my Churches I forever move,
“With ever watchful, ever faithful love;
“Deep in my bosom are inscribed their names;
"My spirit kindles their celestial flames;
“Like golden lamps around I see them shine—
“Pleased in their brightness; grieved at their decline.
“Their starry ministers my hand sustains;—
"Love, love alone, such condescension deigns;
“Nor deem it strange, though Lord of all above,
“I ask the fond return of love for love!"

More still he said, and bade my pen record,
To every Church, a message from its Lord —
He that hath ears to hear, with reverent faith,
Mark what the Spirit to the Churches saith;
Saith in His name, whose eyes as flames of fire,
Peruse each hidden thought, and try each fond desire.

PART II

The scene was changed. His form of heavenly light
Had vanished as a vision from my sight;
The tones whose sweetness still I longed to hear
Had died away upon my list'ning ear,
And left behind that melancholy mood,
That fills the soul in sudden solitude.
My lifted eye in vain essayed to truce
Some fading gleam in Heaven's unmeasured space;
When lo! as sudden as a cloud is riven,
A door seemed opened in the midst of Heaven,
And a clear voice rang from its lofty dome—
"Ascend, and I will show thee things to come."

My Saviour's voice! It acted as a charm,
All fear to banish, and all hope to warm;
And my rapt spirit mounting to the sky,
Tasted the air of immortality.
All was so rich, so ravishing, so new,
At first a wildered glance around I threw;
How glorious was the pavement that I trod!
I stood within the temple of my God!
New power was given to every trembling sense,
To look upon its dread magnificence;
But soon its central glory fixed my eye
In awe profound. I looked and did not die!

In white resplendent, rose a lofty throne;
But oh, the glorious One that sat thereon!
No eye might trace an outline of his form—
It seemed as sun just bursting through the storm!
All colors mingled in one glorious dye;
All colors mingling mocked the dazzled eye;
There beamy jasper blends its purple rays,
With blood red sardius in one fiery blaze,
While circling all a living rainbow played;
Green as the emerald its delicious shade,
Soft as the beauty heavenly Mercy throws
O'er Justice, awful in its deep repose.
Before the throne seven lamps eternal glow—
(Thence comes the flame that lights the Church below,)
While from its centre breaks the thunder's sound,
In peals that shake the infinite around;
And awful voices oracles proclaim,
And lightnings shoot their living bolts of flame.

And now I marked around that glorious hill,
Twice twelve inferior thrones, yet kingly still;

And kingly forms sat on them, clothed in white,
Their golden crowns beamed in the central light—
For every object round that radiant throne
Glowed with strange lustre added to its own.
Princes of Heaven and Sons of God they seemed,
Yet well I knew them to be MEN REDEEMED;
Elders that represent the Church below,
And all the glory that awaits it show.

Before the throne a glassy sea was spread;
Clear as the crystal shone its spacious bed,
And by it, singing their eternal hymn,
In shape mysterious, stood the Seraphim:
Beings all life ! that lead the mighty choir
Of heavenly song, in strains that never tire.
For oft, I marked, at their melodious call,
Those kingly forms in adoration fall,
And cast their crowns, and bless the sovereign hand,
Strong to create and worthy to command.

In His right hand, to whom they bowed in awe,
As I beheld, a mystic roll I saw;
Its contents, worthy of the Only Wise,
Seven awful seals secured from curious eyes.
And yet I deemed that roll, if once unsealed,
The future fortunes of the Church revealed.
Oh what are all man's vain attempts to pry
Into the secrets of futurity,
But vain presumptions, meteoric gleams
Of fancy, wandering- in uncertain dreams,
To those sublime discoveries, which enshrined
The sure foreknowledge of the Eternal Mind.

A mighty challenge sounded thro' the sky—
"Is man or angel worthy, let him try
"To loose the awful seals of Prophecy."

In vain the challenge. Heaven's immense array
Of glorious forms drew back in deep dismay;
Nor could the summoned universe reveal
One creature fit to unloose that awful seal.
I wept that none were worthy. But a voice
From the crowned elders said to me, "Rejoice!
"One being is found worthy! Cease those tears;
" Lo! Judah's Lion triumphs o'er our fears!"

Wondering, I turned me toward the burning throne,
When lo ! sweet image of the Incarnate One,
A Lamb appeared — the spotless victim slain

For human guilt, but now alive again;
At God's own altar, interceding there,
With power divine for every worshipper.
His worth transcendant won that awful book,
On which before no creature dared to look.

Intense delight succeeded to despair —
A flood of heavenly odours filled the air.
Before the Lamb the adoring seraphs fall,
Heaven's princely elders answer to the call;
From golden harps a sweeter strain out-rung,
How new, how wondrous was {lie song they sung!
“Redeemer! thou art worthy! By thy blood
“Our ransomed spirits were restored to G.d;
“And all the glories that invest us here,
"All are thy gift, O Lamb forever dear!"

Tho' angel harp nor angel tongue
Dared break on that peculiar song,
Which must to Earth's redeemed belong,
Yet when that song's rich cadence fell,
Angelic strains began to swell,
And myriad myriad voices sweet
Poured out new praise at Jesus' feet.
And wide and far the anthem roiled,
Nor Heaven that harmony could hold;
Through distant worlds the triumph flew,
And louder «till and louder grew,
Till universal Nature's heart
Beat with strange joy in every part.
Through all the rich, the starry wild,
Where'er creative goodness smiled,
Where'er redemption's wondrous sound
To sinless ears its way had found.
Beings and realms of unknown name
Responsive rung their glad acclaim.;
(For sinful man alone may deem
Lightly of this amazing theme,)
The eternal chain of Silence broke.
And all her echoing voices woke,
And swelled the rapture breathing tide
Of honor to the Lamb that died.

“Worthy the Lamb! Worthy the Lamb!
“Thine is a name o'er every name!
"Self sacrificing love in Thee,
"Hath reached unto infinity!
“And kindled rays before unknown,
“Of glory round thy Father's throne.

“Power, wisdom, riches, strength divine,
"Honor and glory, all are thine.
"We give thy glorious deeds to fame,
"Blessings forever on thy name!
“As we adore the great I am,
"Thee we adore. Incarnate Lamb!”

While thus the angelic multitudes resound
The honors which the Lamb of God have crowned,
Low at his feet the elders fall again.
And the rapt seraphs breathe their sweet amen.
Nor could I less, as with a wondering pride,
I gazed in silence on the Crucified—
The Word made flesh! the God to man allied!
All that in Deity we most revere,
With all that in humanity is dear!
The brilliant crown of Being's mighty plan!
The corner stone of hope to ruined man!
Yes! He is worthy, with consummate grace,
To hold and fill a Mediator's place.
Yes! He is worthy to unseal that Book
On which created natures dared not look.
Yes! He is worthy—worthy to receive
The highest honors Heaven itself can give.

And oh, shall Man on earth alone refuse
To enter into these celestial views?
Shall guilty Man refuse, and he alone,
His Hope, his Saviour, and his God to own?

Dwells there such blindness in the human breast?
Unhappy Man! when wilt thou find thy rest?
Turn, turn, embrace thy long neglected Friend!
So shall thy restless misery have an end;
And thou with rapture and surprise shalt see
The glorious issues of Time's Mystery.

PART III

And now the sounding harps of Heaven were hushed.
And every eye with expectation flushed;
As the First Seal the Lamb in triumph broke,
A seraph's voice aloud like thunder spoke—
“Servant of God ! behold to thee is free,
“This picture of the Future. Come and see!”

A snow-white charger trod the battle plain,
Unbloody Conquest followed in his train,
I knew the royal rider by his crown,
And golden bow that struck its thousands down;
Nor needed more to find the historic key—
Thus pure, thus conquering, came CHRISTIANITY!

A Second Seal is broke. A second age
Is pictured forth on the prophetic page,
A blood-red horse is rushing o'er the fields—
Know ye his rider by the sword he wields.
What new religion makes its way by war.
To whom is given that mighty scimeter—
Thy bloody course, MOHAMMED, will reveal—
Thy history answers to the Second Seal!

The Third Seal opens; and a coal-black steed
Is on the field. Come, and this mystery read.
Know ye the rider by that iron yoke?
Heard ye that voice which threats of famine spoke?
These are the symbols of a priestly power,
That rose in Christendom's disastrous hour.
Black as corruption in its darkest hue;
O'er Europe's neck its crushing yoke it threw,
And spread a famine of the living word—
What power but Popery hath such guilt incurred?

The Fourth Seal opens; and a ghastly horse
Holds o'er the field his swift and dreadful course.
Death is his rider, and the courts of hell
Pour their pale myriads his sad train to swell.
By these tremendous tokens all may see
Thy ghastly triumph, INFIDELITY!
Thine was the "REIGN OF TERROR" and perchance
All the deep sorrows of unhappy France
Are but dim shadows to a future tale
Of blood, at which the world shall yet turn pale.
When fade the Crescent and the Papal Cross,
Then mayst thou gain adherents by their loss.
One fearful moment triumph, and thy breath

Blast mighty nations in untimely death;
While countless martyrs in thy fury slain,
Swell the pale horror of thy dismal reign.

The Fifth Seal opens. And the thrilling cry
Of martyr'd blood at length ascends on high;
At God's high altar I beheld a throng
Slain for the truth they held so firm and long.
There all that perished in the fatal strife
By Pagan fury waged on Christian life;
All they who, cleaving to their Saviour's word.

Gave their life-blood to flesh the Moslem sword;
Or found from Papal hands a sterner doom,
And pined beneath the Inquisition's gloom;
Or when pale Atheism ruled the ghastly hour,
Fell victims to its diabolic power;
All, all united, raised their dread appeal —
"Judge of the Earth ! thy righteousness reveal. "
Nor cried unheard. To each white robes were given,
Signs of acceptance at the throne of Heaven;
Though Mercy, still long suffering, made delay
Of vengeance till the great appointed day.
When the full choir of martyrdom complete,
Shall call stern Justice to her awful seat.

The Sixth Seal opens. And that awful day,
So long delayed, appears in dread array.
Like some proud vessel when she strikes a rock,
Lo! universal Nature feels the shock.
The fading sun assumes the sackcloth's hue;
The moon as blood glares on the troubled view;
And as, when warring winds in heaven dispute,
The trembling fig tree casts her timeless fruit.
So the sweet stars in dim distraction fly,
And sanguine shadows stain the earth and sky.
All Nature shudders through her stricken heart,
Her mighty continents and islands start,
The steadfast mountains from their seats are hurled,
And Ocean roars around a rending world!

One upward glance Earth's fearful myriads roll—
The heavens are rent--they vanish as a scroll!
The Lamb descends with all his glorious train,
One mighty shout rings o'er th' etherial plain.
The trump of God awakes the slumbering tomb,
The Archangel's voice proclaims the day of doom.

In forms immortal, see the righteous rise,

To meet their Judge and Saviour in the skies;
While shrieks of horror pierce the troubled air,
From all the wicked, in their deep despair—
' Hide us, ye rocks! Ye mountains, on us fall!
' O, who may bear thy wrath, thou righteous Judge of all?'